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AMID DEMAND FOR STATEHOOD, LADAKH GETS 5 NEW DISTRICTS

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday announced the creation of five new districts in Ladakh, raising the total number to seven

MOVE EXPECTED TO IMPROVE GOVERNANCE

The new districts are: Zanskar, Drass, Sham, Nubra, and Changthang. At present, Ladakh has two districts—Leh and Kargil. Due to its size—it is the largest UT in terms of area—and difficult terrain, the UT faces administrative challenges. The move to have more districts could address this. Locals have welcomed the decision with the hope that it will improve governance | P9

LOCAL ORGANISATIONS WELCOME DECISION

- Congress' Ladakh chief Nawang Rigzin Jora said: "Creating five more districts further strengthens our demand for statehood because the UT of Pondicherry with only four districts has a legislative assembly."
- Ladakh Buddhist Association president Chering Dorje Lakrook said: "This will benefit people in far-flung areas by getting all facilities at their doorstep."

86,904 sq km

TOTAL AREA OF LADAKH, WHICH HAS A POPULATION OF 2.74 LAKH (2011 CENSUS)

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Rally to secretariat illegal: Kolkata police

Swarm of people in RG Kar seminar hall seen in purported new video

SULAGNA SENGUPTA @Kolkata

A purported video showing several outsiders, including the police, private security guards, lawyer Shantanu Dey, forensic expert Debasish Shome and hospital staff, at the seminar hall of the RG Kar Medical College on August 9 — the day a trainee doctor's body was found there — but not the victim's family members, has emerged, raising serious questions over crowding the crime scene and tampering of evidence.

Meanwhile, a 'Nabanna (Secretariat) Abhijan' rally, planned by students under the 'Sangrami Mancha and Chhatra Samaj', seeking Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's resignation, was illegal, the West Bengal police said, adding no permission was sought for holding such a protest on Tuesday and that there were inputs over possible unrest during the march.

The 43-second video raised questions on who called the lawyer and why the hospital authorities failed to file a case of unnatural death. This newspaper could not independently verify the authenticity of the clip.

The Kolkata Police, however, claimed that the seminar hall was cordoned off. "The seminar room measures 51' X 32'. The place where the victim's body was found inside the seminar room was cordoned off using curtains. There is no question of anyone entering that area. People, who can be seen gathering in the video, were all outside the cordoned off area," said a senior officer.

However, the state BJP president Sukanta Majumdar said, "The video shows that the crime scene had almost become a fair ground."

Kolkata Mayor and TMC minister Firhad Hakim, in his rebuttal said, "Some over-enthusiastic people may have gathered there. Later, police sealed the crime scene."

As for the proposed rally on Tuesday, ADG (Law & Order) Manoj Kumar Verma said, "Nabanna is a restricted area. So far no one has sought our permission to hold protest near Nabanna."

Junior doctors protest against the rape-murder of a trainee doctor, in Kolkata | PTI

NEW PRINCIPAL OF RG KAR CALLED TO CBI OFFICE

The CBI has named Sandip Ghosh, former principal, in the FIR in connection with its probe into the alleged financial irregularities at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. On Monday, new principal Manas Kumar Bandhyopadhyay and new deputy superintendent Saptarshi Chakraborty were called by the CBI at their office in Salt Lake

Darshan 'jolly' time: 9 jail staff suspended

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

NINE police officers, including the chief superintendent of Bengaluru Central Prison at Parappana Agrahara, have been suspended after a video and photograph of actor Darshan Thoogudeepa having tea and cigarette with other prisoners in the jail went viral on Sunday.

While three FIRs have been registered in connection with this incident, Darshan is likely to be shifted from Bengaluru to another prison as Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has instructed some top police officers to do so.

V Seshumurthy, chief superintendent, Bengaluru Central Prison, Mallikarjum Swamy, superintendent of prisons, Sharan Basappa Amingad and Prabhu S Khandelwal, jailers, LS Kuppeswamy and Srikanth Talwar, assistant jailers, Venkappa and Sampath Kumar, head warders, and K Basappa, warder, have been suspended.

Following criticism from various quarters over giving special treatment to the actor inside the prison, Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara visited the prison along with DG & IGP Alok Mohan and DGP (Prisons & Correctional Services) Malini Krishnamoorthy on Monday afternoon.

Admitting lapses on the part of prison officials, the home minister told reporters that nine officers have been suspended for dereliction of duty. The police have mentioned the actor's name in the three FIRs, besides naming rowdy sheeters Wilson Garden Naga and Kulla Seena, and Darshan's manager Nagaraj, who are seen with the actor in the photograph.

The police said the three cases, registered at Parappana Agrahara police station, have been handed over to officers of other stations to ensure an impartial probe. The cases have been registered on complaints from DIG (Prisons) Somashekhar.

The FIRs pertain to use of mobile phones and smoking cigarettes on the prison premises and smuggling these items into the jail. Some prison officers have also been named as accused in the FIRs.

CONTINUED ON: P3

CM admits to lapses in B'luru Central Prison

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who was in Belagavi, on Monday admitted to lapses at the Bengaluru Central Prison at Parappana Agrahara, in connection with the alleged VIP treatment provided to Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa by the jail authorities. P3

J&K POLL

NC TO CONTEST 51 SEATS, CONG 32

After hectic negotiation, the NC and the Congress on Monday agreed to contest 51 and 32 seats, respectively, for the J&K polls. Meanwhile, the BJP withdrew its first list of 44 candidates following protests. It later released a revised list of 16 candidates only for the 1st phase | P9

8-MONTH-OLD

Maha embarrassment as Modi-inaugurated Shivaji statue collapses

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @Mumbai

A giant statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in December 2023 in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district, came crashing down on Monday. The 35-foot statue broke into several pieces around 1 pm at Rajkot Fort in Malvan, officials said. Following the incident, the opposition parties slammed the BJP-Shiv Sena-led state government, accusing it of using low quality material for the statue.

Taking potshots at the PM, NCP(SP) chief Sharad Pawar said no work done under him is of good quality. "The BJP government and its leaders are high on publicity stunts and low on quality delivery," he said. NCP(SP) leader Jayant Patil alleged: "The Maharashtra government accepts commissions and gives contracts accordingly."

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde blamed it on the gusty winds and vowed to rebuild the statue. "The wind was blowing at a speed of 45km per hour, which caused the statue to fall... It was designed and built by the Navy. We will rebuild it even stronger.. Navy officials will also take part in the rebuilding," he said.

Remnants of the Shivaji statue at Rajkot Fort. Inset: before the collapse

CM defends whitener in wife's letter to MUDA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah has hit back at BJP and JDS leaders over the allegation of tampering with a letter submitted by his wife to MUDA officials seeking alternative sites for acquiring a piece of land owned by her for formation of a residential layout in Mysuru.

In a statement here, Siddaramaiah accused the BJP and JDS leaders of politicising the issue and defaming his family. Their allegation is baseless, he said.

"The BJP and JDS leaders are crying hoarse as if it is a big crime to use whitener to mask four or five words in the letter submitted to MUDA by my wife," he said.

"The words concealed are clearly visible in this video. The BJP and JDS leaders should see it properly to find the truth," the chief minister said.

Siddaramaiah said that his wife had requested MUDA to grant her alternative sites for acquiring her land. She had asked for sites at Third Stage of Devanur Layout developed by MUDA or at a residential layout to be developed later. Due to non-availability of sites at Devanur Layout, whitener was used to amend the request for sites at a layout to be developed by MUDA.

"There is no note, no order, no instruction in this regard. It is simply a request to grant sites for the land that rightfully belonged to us acquired by MUDA," Siddaramaiah clarified.

On the allegation that whitener was used to conceal the content of the letter, Siddaramaiah termed it absurd.

CONTINUED ON: P4

IN TUMAKURU

3 die after having food at village fair

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Tumakuru

THREE women died after having food at a fair in Bullasandra village of Madhugiri taluk on Sunday. Meanwhile, eleven people are being treated in a makeshift clinic in Bullasandra.

The deceased have been identified as Thimmakka, 80, and Giriyamma, 86, residents of Bullasandra, and Katamma, 45, from Siddhagiri village in Madakasira taluk of Andhra Pradesh. She had come to her parents' house to participate in the fair.

The annual fair of deities Kariyamma and Mutturaya Bhootappa began on Saturday. After having non-vegetarian food, many developed symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea.

"Individual families prepared food and brought it to the fair. Those who had the food prepared by three families developed health complications," assistant commissioner Goturu Shivanna said.

Shivanna, Madhugiri taluk panchayat executive officer Lakshman, health officer Srinivas and panchayat development officer Dayananda visited the village and took stock of the situation. Shivanna said food samples have been sent to a laboratory for tests. Seven people died at Chinnenahalli village in Madhugiri taluk recently after drinking contaminated water.

A makeshift clinic at a school in Bullasandra treats pilgrims who attended the fair.

Lending interface to ease credit

BEN KOCHUVEEDAN @Mumbai

IN a bid to help smaller borrowers, especially those in rural areas, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) plans to launch a Unified Lending Interface (ULI). The RBI is currently piloting an application for 'frictionless credit' and it will be launched nationwide soon; it will become the UPI on the credit side, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said. The new technology is aimed at reducing the time taken for appraisal, especially for smaller borrowers and those in rural areas, he added.

"The Reserve Bank had last year started a tech platform for enabling frictionless credit. The central bank proposes to call it a Unified Lending Interface. The initiative is still in pilot stage and will be launched in due course," Das said while delivering the keynote address at the Global Conference on Digital Public Infrastructure and Emerging Technologies, a part of RBI@90 initiative, in Bengaluru on Monday.

> This platform facilitates seamless and consent-based flow of digital information, including even land records of various states, from multiple data service providers to lenders
>
> RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das

He added the 'new trinity' of JAM-UPI-ULI will be a revolutionary step forward in India's digital infrastructure journey.

The ULI platform facilitates seamless and consent-based flow of digital information, including land records of various states, from multiple data service providers to lenders. This is expected to cut down the time taken for credit appraisal, especially for smaller and rural borrowers.

The RBI Governor said the banking regulator is constantly working on devising new policies, systems and platforms to make financial sector stronger, nimble, customer-centric.

Das also noted that UPI has the potential to evolve into a cheaper and quicker alternative to the available channels of cross-border remittances.

BJP DISTANCES ITSELF FROM KANGANA GYAN

HARPREET BAJWA @Chandigarh

A day after versatile actor and newbie BJP Lok Sabha member Kangana Ranaut's foot-in-the-mouth statement on the 2020 farmers agitation, the national party leadership disowned it, adding she is neither permitted nor authorised to comment on matters of the party's policy.

Kangana had posted a clip of an interview in which she suggested that a "Bangladesh-like situation" could have erupted in India following the agitation against the three controversial farm laws, had the country's leadership not been strong. She went on to allege that "bodies were hanging and rapes were taking place" during the farmers' protest and pointed fingers at a larger conspiracy at the behest of America and China behind the agitation.

Sensing the damage it could cause to the party, its central leadership put out a rather harsh statement, saying: "On behalf of the party, Ms Ranaut is neither permitted nor authorised to comment on policy matters. The Bharatiya Janata Party has directed Kangana Ranaut to not make any statement of this kind in future."

The party apparently is worried over its possible fallout in the Haryana assembly elections slated for October 1, as farmers and Jats are already unhappy with the BJP in the state, though the party is pulling out all the stops to woo them.

All India Kisan Sabha president Ashok Dhawale described Kangana's remarks as highly condemnable. Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, who is a Lok Sabha member, lashed out at her, saying she is "mentally ill".

EXPRESS READ

Modi, Biden discuss Ukraine, Bangladesh

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday spoke to US President Joe Biden and briefed him about his visit to Ukraine. The two leaders also discussed the ongoing situation in Bangladesh, Modi said on X.

TEFLON FLU

Beware! Non-stick cookware can make you sick

RISHITA KHANNA @Bengaluru

TOXIC fumes from overheated "non-stick" teflon-coated cookware can potentially lead to health risks with symptoms of flu known as "teflon flu".

Experts told *The New Indian Express* that in India, where non-stick cookware is widely used, this condition, which also mimics other flu symptoms, could be significantly underreported due to lack of awareness or misdiagnosis.

They said exposure to these toxic fumes can lead to serious health complications and suggested using cookware made of 'stainless steel' or 'cast iron'.

Meanwhile, doctors warned against using scratched or worn out pans, noting that even a single scratch on teflon-coated cookware can release thousands of particles.

Such scratched or damaged pans should be discarded immediately as chemicals from them can remain in the body and pose significant health risks, including kidney and testicular cancer.

Edwina Raj, head of services - clinical nutrition and dietetics, Aster CMI Hospital, said individuals get "teflon flu" when they are exposed to fumes from overheated teflon-coated cookware. The condition is linked to breakdown of a chemical compound used in teflon.

When teflon is exposed to high temperatures, it releases toxic particles and gases leading to symptoms such as headaches, chills, fever, chest tightness, cough and sore throat, Edwina said. CONTINUED ON: P5